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PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH PRIME MINISTER FOLLOWING MEETING WITH PRESIDENT KIM YOUNG-SAM, SHILLA HOTEL, SEOUL, KOREA, 21/6/93

PM: Well I've just come away from a very convivial discussion with President Kim Young-sam, a long and interesting meeting where I think we found much common ground on many issues. We had a broad discussion about our relationship between our two countries, the context we work in in the Asia Pacific, various issues which relate to North Asia, in particular, that is, the relationship on the Korean Peninsula. Various problems with the North, a discussion about the nuclear issue, their relations with other countries in the region - China and Japan - and ours, APBC and its prospects. In all a very fruitful conversation which I'll be happy to give you more details about at the press conference later.

J: Prime Minister is Australian business doing enough to get into this rapidly growing market do you think?

PM: Well we've not done that much, either country, in terms of investment compared to say other countries of the area. And yet we are natural partners. Korea is already a customer for a very large proportion of our mineral exports and we can do much more together. The complementary nature of the economies is really quite profound. So, I think they see Australia having particular advantages, not just as a raw material supplier, but as a provider of services and also our skills in such things as telecommunications, water quality, the environmental sciences, computer sciences and services - education services, tourism. There is I think tremendous potential between these two countries and maybe we've been late in the piece discovering it, but I think certainly the President understands that.

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J: You raised the issue of the republic in the speech at lunch time. Peter Reith's now saying it's only a token debate, John Hewson's backing off at a hundred miles an hour. Isn't this rather bad news for you?

PM: No, I think that it may not in the first instance be good news for Australia. I mean, you're not seeing the leadership from the Opposition on any of these subjects. Mr Reith regards himself as a champion spoiler on constitutional referenda. Let me tell you - I say this to the Liberal Party advisedly - he was the Labor Party's best asset in the last fifteen to eighteen months. He was without a shadow of a doubt - through all our polling and everything else - Mr Reith was unambiguously Labor's best asset. Now, whenever he wishes to come to the leadership of the Liberal Party we will, of course, be over the moon.

As far as Dr Hewson is concerned, Dr Hewson has an opportunity to show some real form on a matter which the High Court has made a decision about and to put down the crude and primitive remarks of the leader of the National Party - he's obviously in a position way beyond his capacities in life - and also to make it clear on the matter that Australia not should, but must, become a sovereign country where its head of state is an Australian, on that there must be leadership from the Liberal Party and if it's not first instance it will have to come later.

ends.